

# Nevada Conservation Highlights

## GRAZING FOR SAGE GROUSE

by Chuck Petersen, Range  
Conservationist

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Owyhee have recently completed phase one of an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract. The Tribal Environmental Protection Program (TEPP), led by Marcie Phillips, initiated planning in 2003 that led to an EQIP contract that is geared towards implementing grazing management practices to improve sage grouse habitat and rangeland water quality in the Blue Creek Watershed.

The project was originally conceived by Thadeus Kostrubala, a former environmental engineer with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. The idea, in part, was to identify habitats and watersheds on the reservation. This would benefit the Tribes by providing livestock and wildlife watering facilities, increase livestock grazing distribution, and improve overall water quality in the watershed.

The individuals who have been instrumental in the initiation and implementation of the TEPP EQIP contract are Heather Lawrence, Environmental Scientist, Jennifer Eisele, Pesticide and Solid Waste Coordinator, and Lee Porter, NRCS Engineering Technician.

The NRCS Elko Field Office is looking forward in continuing this working relationship with the Tribes, resulting in the ongoing promotion of natural resources.

## USDA AND UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF STUDYING SNOW AND FORECASTING STREAMFLOW

### 100th Anniversary of J. E. Church's Snow Sampling Technique

On May 2, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) celebrated 100 years of studying snow and forecasting stream flow by honoring the contributions of Dr. James E. Church, a Nevada classics professor. Church pioneered the techniques the USDA and others now use to measure snow and forecast seasonal water supplies for millions of producers and residents in the Western and Central United States.

During a special ceremony at Morrill Hall, the oldest building on the UNR campus, USDA presented University Interim President Joe Crowley with a centennial plaque to recognize Church's contributions to snow surveying in general and USDA's Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program in particular. In addition, Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary Merlyn Carlson sampled snow on Mt. Rose, within sight of the mountaintop where Church conducted most of his snow sampling research. NRCS snow survey experts were available to discuss snowpack results and streamflow forecasts for May.

The Associated Press news service, over 30 U.S. newspapers in 17 States, Forbes, MSNBC and WJLA News (Washington, D.C.) published or broadcasted stories on the celebration. In addition, articles were printed in the Reno Gazette-Journal, Las Vegas Review Journal, and Lahontan Valley News, and were aired by Reno's ABC, CBS and NBC television stations.

## NEVADA NRCS'ers TOM McKAY AND TERI KNIGHT RECEIVE AWARDS

Two Nevada NRCS employees have been recognized for their exceptional achievements. Tom McKay, Soil Data Quality Specialist, has been named the 2006 Soil Scientist of the Year by the National Cooperative Soil Survey and Soil Survey Division. McKay was recognized for his achievements in all facets of production soil survey. McKay has mapped more than 1.3 million acres, supervised nearly 4 million acres of soil mapping, and has done technical edits on more than 20 surveys covering roughly 26 million acres. He will receive his award at the 2006 Western Regional Cooperative Soil Survey and Western Society of Soil Science Conference in Park City, Utah, in June.

Teri Knight, Coordinator for the High Desert Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc., received an Award of Commendation from the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture in April. Knight received the award for her outstanding effort as the lead author and editor of *Trees for Tomorrow: Southern Nevada Guide to Tree Selection and Care, Centennial Edition*.

A committee of twenty individuals worked for two years to develop the book that was funded by corporate and local sponsors, private organizations, governmental supporters, and a U.S. Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry grant awarded by the Nevada Division of Forestry. The NDF grant required a 1:1 match, but was matched 4:1, thanks to volunteer efforts that amounted to \$42,500. The book was released on Arbor Day 2005 and since then, 150,000 copies of the book have been distributed to the public for free.



Tom McKay  
Soil Scientist of the Year



Teri Knight receives her Award of  
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## NEVADA NATIVE SEED PLANT PILOT PROJECT STARTED IN THE MOJAVE DESERT

*by Teri Knight, High Desert RC&D Coordinator*

The High Desert RC&D Council, Inc., in partnership with the NRCS Tucson Plant Materials Center, Nevada Bureau of Land Management, Conservation District of Southern Nevada, and local southern Nevada growers, is initiating a pilot project to grow two native riparian plants for seed production. The project is the result of a need to produce and utilize native plant material for land restoration following wild land fires, large-scale weed removal, or other land disturbances.

In 2005, 1.1 million acres burned in Nevada, with 75 percent of the fires occurring in the Mojave Desert vegetation in Clark and Lincoln Counties. All land managers are responsible for stabilization of wildlife habitat and lessening soil erosion following a fire. The objective of this initiative is to develop adequate supplies of seed and plant material of two riparian grass species, alkali sacaton and alkali muhly.

The High Desert RC&D Council and its partners will provide leadership and technical assistance in plant production; economic diversification for local growers; and improved conservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of private and public land.



Alkali muhly, a riparian grass, is one of the native plants being produced in the project

## GREAT BASIN PLANT MATERIALS CENTER CLOSER TO REALITY

Two new employees have been hired to staff the Great Basin Plant Materials Center located on the University of Nevada's Agricultural Experiment Station in Fallon, Nevada. Steve Perkins is the PMC manager and Harry Buck is the farm manager.

The first PMC advisory committee meeting was held on May 10th in Reno. Participants are very excited about the opportunities the new PMC is offering, including producing plant materials to restore rangelands and other areas destroyed by natural disasters such as wildfires or floods, and conducting plant research.

## RANGE MANAGEMENT SCHOOL HELD

*by Gene Fults, State Rangeland Management Specialist*

The Eureka Opera House in central Nevada was the site for the first Nevada Range Management School in December 2005. The event was partially sponsored by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. Fifty-eight ranchers, grazing permittees, agency, and university range managers were all on the same page in terms of the rangeland resource.

The 8-hour school covered sound science of plant growth, timing and duration of grazing, animal nutrition and behavior, rangeland monitoring, grazing response index, riparian management, and grazing plan strategies. It was emphasized and re-emphasized that with the proper management of rangeland resources, both the livestock and vegetation can be maintained and improved.

Nevada NRCS'ers Chuck Petersen, Rangeland Management Specialist, and Gene Fults, State Rangeland Management Specialist, were part of the instructor cadre. Other instructors were from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension; Nevada Department of Agriculture; Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Forest Service; University of Nevada College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources; and the Nevada ranching industry. Four other sessions were held in various locations in the state in April and May.

## 2005 Harmony Workshop



*by Kari Emm, Public Affairs Specialist*

The 2005 Harmony Workshop was hosted at the Green Horn Creek Guest Ranch in Greenville, Calif., October 17-21. Nevada NRCS sent 15 employees to the training through a collaboration with California NRCS.

The workshop provided employees with a new foundation to improve their delivery of programs and services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Employees received a basic understanding of tribal entities and tribal culture. They learned skills and knowledge that will assist them while working on tribal lands.

Activities consisted of American Indian storytelling, basket weaving, dancing, cooking, an overview of tribal law, personal accounts of elders, and much more.

Feedback received at the end of the training was very positive. Many of attendees stated, "This was one of the best trainings provided by NRCS."



Craig McKnight and Jessica Rudden make acorn soup, a traditional food of the Maidu Native people